

The right reason to write a book

Anger. Or is that the wrong reason? Either way, it is what drove me to write *Organizing Our Marvellous Neighbours*.

But let me start out with a bit of personal history. I was always a good speller. On the only occasion I lost a spelling bee in grade school, the word that did me in was *beau*, ironically enough. One year, we had a weekly writing lesson in which I sat at the front of the class spelling words on demand for my fellow students.

Thirty years have passed, but I still *notice* spelling. I notice spelling *mistakes*. Those aren't always important (perfect spelling in your chat window does not make your instant messages perfect), but spelling mistakes, punctuation errors, and the like will jump right out at me. They're often the first thing I notice when I look at a page – a phenomenon that carried through to the publication of my first book, where I noticed the mistakes before anything else.

But I've noticed other things beyond misspellings. I noticed across-the-board American spellings in Canadian publications – and, much more often, all-*British* spellings. I *noticed* those things, but that's all I did.

The year 2002 would be a turning point. I'd been watching TV captioning for 30 years, but it was in 2002 that CBC agreed to closed-caption 100% of its programming on two networks, CBC Television and Newsworld. That came about as the result of a human-rights complaint that CBC had lost. Suddenly CBC needed a much larger in-house captioning department – much larger than the two women I had met before. One hated her job and the other was keen but

not very competent. This is hardly a culture that nurtures exactitude in written language, and lo and behold, the expanded CBC captioning department embarked on a program (“programme”) of captioning Canadian, American, British, Australian, and all other shows with British spelling and British quotation marks. It was in my face *every single day*.

The slow boil would only overflow after I read a book on new Toronto architecture, *Design City Toronto*. The writers, Sean Stanwick and Jennifer Flores, are Canadian, as is the photographer, Tom Arban, but the publisher is British (Wiley U.K.). The book was replete with inaccuracies, had nearly unreadable typography, and carried out nonstop cheerleading for the questionable premise that interior design and starchitecture make Toronto notable.

What angered me was the use of British English in a book written by Canadians about Canadian architecture. Here is a real sentence from *Design City Toronto*, on the topic of Daniel Libeskind’s redesign of the Royal Ontario Museum: “[T]he idea of a fully transparent crystal is slightly misleading, as anodised aluminium will cover 75 per cent of the structure, with the remaining 25 per cent being a random pattern of slices and wedges of transparent glass.”

“Anodised aluminium”? How many Canadians do you know for whom “aluminum” is five syllables? (That would be “al·yoo·minny·um.” There’s an alternate British pronunciation, “a·loo·min·yum.”)

To paraphrase Ustinov, *Design City Toronto* is a kind of New York copy-edited by the British. And it was the tipping point.

Telling you about yourself

Organizing Our Marvellous Neighbours intends to live up to its subtitle, *How to Feel Good About Canadian English*. It's a book that is packed with research and facts that, I hope, will winnow away certain doubts you may have – doubts that Canadian English is real, doubts that Canadian English spellings are real, doubts about what spelling to use. Almost all the time, I'll be telling you to use the spellings everyone else uses – and that will often be noticeably different from the spellings your computer tells you to use.

The whole purpose of this book is to make it easier for you to read and write on your computer in genuine Canadian English. This book is *for* the computer user. It's a guide to help you with every E-mail, every instant message, every text message, every blog post, and every comment on somebody else's blog post you ever write – *and* with all the words you ever “process.” It's a guide to help you with every document you will ever write.

You can also use the advice for the smaller and smaller range of circumstances in which you ever need to write by hand. (That might be a daily occurrence for a schoolteacher, but it's an ever-rarer scenario for most people.) Still, the whole thrust of the book is computer use. In part, that's why it is an *electronic* book.

But before I can help you write Canadian English correctly, I have to persuade you that it even exists in the first place.

This just in: Canada exists

There really is such a thing as Canadian English. You might half-believe that already.

Think for a moment about how Canadians sound when they speak English. In approximate terms, we sound like Americans – perhaps not like Louisianans, probably not like New York Jews, possibly not like gay contestants on *Project Runway*, and maybe not like black Texans, but *certainly* like newscasters and reporters on American TV networks. We sound like Ohioans, Mainers, Washingtonians.

There's a reason for all that: Canadian English *is* American English – in spoken form, at least. Our spoken accents descend directly from the influx of 50,000 United Empire Loyalists circa 1783. They rejected American independence and moved to a country whose residents were already loyal to the royal family and likely to stay that way.

The historical fact of the United Empire Loyalists is just that cut and dried and just that easy to retell. If you grew up in Canada, you learned about the Loyalists in history class, but you probably forgot about them. What you probably never learned about is their pivotal and overwhelming role in the evolution of the Canadian accent.

If the Loyalists had not emigrated here, we might not exactly sound British today, but we might have ended up using the mid-Atlantic *Canadian dainty* accent spoken by the upper classes in the early 20th century, like former governor-general Vincent Massey. (The accent sounds like a twee old man – an

ascot-wearing codger who really likes opera and lacy placemats – straining to talk like a Brit.)

As it stands, the Canadian accent isn't dainty or broad or anything else. It's pleasingly neutral, at least to Americans, which explains why so many Canadian broadcast journalists and actors have sought, and secured, gainful employment in the U.S. (That's why we sound like U.S. newscasters – lots of them are Canadian.) We sound like Americans whose hometowns a listener cannot quite place. Actually, we sound like Americans whose hometowns are so noncontroversial they aren't even worth thinking about.

The Canadian accent is not the Ottawa Valley accent frequently mocked by American comedians. That mockery is a tiresome old trope reminiscent of Borscht Belt standup routines. It reached its apotheosis in the English dialect spoken by “the Canadian minister of movies” in *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. When they aren't making fun of the way we “all” say *about*, Americans pretend we end every sentence with *eh*?

It seems the last thing Americans ever bother to notice is how much we sound like them. They don't quite notice that we're speaking their language.

Now, *Canadians* certainly have not stayed ignorant of our own dialect. Only in Canada could a dictionary become a best-seller, and that's exactly what happened with the Canadian Oxford Dictionary in 1998. That was not the first dictionary in living memory to treat Canadian English: Two others, by Gage and by Nelson, were published at almost the same time. The Oxford dictionaries were, however, better – and were relentlessly promoted in Canada's middlebrow media by their editor, the jolly mediævalist Katherine Barber.

(Importantly, this book uses the Canadian Oxford Dictionary [Second Edition, 2004] as its reference source: With almost no exceptions, I consider a

spelling listed in that book to be correct – first headwords only, not alternate or variant spellings.)

From Barber and the Oxford dictionaries, and from Barber's later books, we learned that Canadians have a wealth of terminology that's all our own. It ranges from the obvious (political terms like *sovereignty-association* and *MLA*) to much more common terms that, true to form, we never really noticed are Canadianisms (like *cash* for cash register or *bachelor* as a kind of apartment). We've learned a lot about our own English.

But Canadians, ever open to duality and contradiction, inhabit multiple states simultaneously. We're happy to make a dictionary a bestseller, thereby lionizing Canadian English, but we focus on pronunciations and unusual word choices, not spellings. That has left us confused about Canadian spelling – ironic given that the book we made a bestseller offers solid advice on spelling.

Still, if push came to shove, many of us would use across-the-board British spellings, since the last thing we'd ever want to be mistaken for is Americans. Indeed, Canadian English has been used as a thin plank of Canadian nationalism for decades. But few of us managed to notice that we were asserting Canadian independence by spelling like Brits and talking like Americans.

To be more precise about it, when it comes to spelling, Canadians fall into three camps.

1. At the top of the heap are a few nitpicking ultra-perfectionists who have the rules down pat and write fluent Canadian English. On good days, I'm in this group.
2. Many more Canadians are confused and unsure about the whole issue and let their computer correct their spelling for them.

3. Then there are the most troublesome group of all – a few *other* nitpicking ultra-perfectionists who *also* are confused and unsure about the whole issue. They're like an amalgam of the other two groups with an added dash of snobbery. These writers believe there is no agreement on Canadian spelling. They are hungry for a quick fix, and the one they settle on is the across-the-board use of British spelling. Obviously the citizens of this country aren't anything as lowly and commonplace as Americans, so it is surely out of the question to standardize on American spellings. And who really knows what Canadian spelling is anyway?

Oxford knows. I do. And, by the time you're finished with this book, you will too.

The problem in a nutshell: *-ize*, *-our*, and *-ll-*

If you want quick answers, this is the chapter to read first.

What makes Canadian spelling different?

- The huge majority of English words have identical spellings in all dialects – for example, every word in this sentence uses the same spelling everywhere.
- We use *-ize* endings the way Americans do: *organize*, *paralyze*, *decompartmentalization*. (We also write *cozy*.) But a lot of words that look similar are never spelled with *-ize* by any English-speakers, including *arise*, *exercise* and *advertise*.
- We use *-our* endings the way the British do: *honour*, *neighbour*, *colour*. But some compounds never use *-our* for any English-speakers, including *coloration*.
- Sometimes we double a letter like *L* or *T* in verbs and adjectives the way the British do: *marvellous*, *targetted*. (Not everyone agrees, and this lack of agreement is a problem.)
- A few isolated words are spelled the British way (*cheque* [banking]). A few others are spelled the American way (*curb* [sidewalk edge], *tire* [automotive]).

- A few verb forms match the American practice, not the British one (*oriented*, not *orientated*).
- We drop some *Es* (*movable*) and retain some others (*axe*, *catalogue*, *analogue*).
- We differentiate a few noun/verb pairs that use *-ice* or *-ise* endings. Nouns like *offence* and *defence* are spelled that way, while nouns like *licence* and *practice* are paired with verbs like *license* and *practise*.

In Canada, it's incorrect to use all-British spelling (*organise*, *neighbour*, *marvellous*, *kerb*, *tyre*). It's just as incorrect to go American all the way (*organize*, *neighbor*, *marvelous*, *curb*, *tire*). If you do either of those things, some of the words you write will be misspelled.

Do you need a handy cheatsheet?

I've written a cheatsheet that gives you quickie reminders about Canadian spelling. You can print out an [HTML file](#) or a [PDF](#) and tape it onto your cubicle wall for quick reference.

Some real research into real spellings

The right way to spell is the way most people spell. This *is* a popularity contest. That may come as a shock, but it is a statement of *descriptivism*, the fundamental principle of lexicography (dictionary-making). Descriptivism documents and explains actual usage. It *describes* actual usage. Its converse is *prescriptivism*, in which an authority attempts to dictate or regulate (*prescribe*) usage.

Descriptivism is a powerful principle. It may seem as though we should trust the writers of dictionaries because they know more than we do – but that is true only to the extent that they have more data and they use their dictionaries to report that data. When a dictionary tells you how to spell a word, it does so on the basis of how the word is spelled in real usage and rarely on the basis of the opinions of the writers of the dictionary.

People don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about dictionaries, let alone talking about them. If the whole subject of the authority of a dictionary comes up in the first place, people might assume that a dictionary represents the wishes of unidentified experts who somehow, behind the scenes, decide what the spellings of words are.

That actually has happened, usually in a diluted and relatively benign form, in other languages. Chinese, German, Portuguese, and Spanish have all had spelling reforms in the latter part of the 20th century; there's an entirely separate way of writing Chinese called simplified Chinese. But spelling reform just does not happen in English. It's been proposed from time to time, but it never actually comes to pass. (The case of French is more complicated, as authorities in

Quebec and France have attempted to exert a great deal of influence over correct spelling and usage. But nobody is attempting to exert that kind of influence over English.)

Descriptivism implies that, over time, spellings may change because usage has changed. Of course this is a feedback loop: If enough people spell a word in a certain way, that becomes the official spelling. But it is not a perfect system and nothing happens overnight. If people continually mistype *the* as *teh* and commit that spelling to print or publish it online, it would be many years before *teh* were added as a legitimate alternate spelling, and possibly decades before it were listed as the dominant spelling. It takes a while to amass enough data for descriptionists to describe. And for neologisms that catch on quickly (as opposed to neologisms used only by the people who coin them), it can be tricky to establish a dominant spelling. (Is the slang version of an informal epithet spelled *beeyotch* or *biotch*?)

There are some cases where descriptivism fails completely. One is proper names, especially the names of people. If your family name is Smythe, nobody has any business trying to correct it to Smith. But some proper names do leave room for interpretation, especially if they include a word ending in *-our* or *-or*. (Does the U.S. Secretary of Labor become Secretary of Labour during a visit to London?)

Descriptivism can be scary at first. It sounds very much like mob rule. That's what it is, except that the mob amasses and exerts its will in slow motion. And descriptivism can be misinterpreted: If you casually glance at a few Canadian English documents and observe that not every word in a certain category is spelled the same, you could conclude that there *is* no consensus about Canadian spelling and you're free to do what you want. The opposite is the case: Given enough data, a consensus is discernible almost all the time.

When it comes to spellings of common nouns and most proper nouns, *Organizing Our Marvellous Neighbours* is rampantly descriptivist. This book is all about telling you what everyone else is doing so that you can do exactly the same thing.

Original research

This book would be of even less interest if all I managed to accomplish was to reiterate the advice of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. Its lexicographers set the standard for Canadian English usage in most respects, including spelling. But they're too institutional and slow.

The more you read about Katherine Barber, former editor-in-chief of Canadian dictionaries at Oxford University Press, the more impressed you are meant to become at her group's monumental reading task. They read the entire Canadian Tire catalogue (as the *Globe and Mail* mentioned, 2007; even the Amazon listing for the dictionary repeats that factoid). They read "logging magazines, fish-farming magazines, dairy-farmer magazines, hockey books, figure-skating books and curling books" (*Toronto Star*, 2007).

The editors of the New Oxford American Dictionary named *podcast* word of the year for 2005, but I've seen no evidence at all that Oxford's Canadian editors bother to look at online sources. Perhaps "bothers" is the wrong word, because there is such a mass of text available online that it *is* a bother to research. But it can be done, and I did it.

I decided to conduct my own lexicographic research in parallel to Oxford's. It might seem like a puny effort, but I don't think it is. Barber had a staff of three; they may have worked all day on the subject, but there were only four

times as many of them as there are of me. And I looked in places they didn't.

For this book's original research, I canvassed all the following sources using two broad methods.

Computerized research

In these cases, I downloaded and/or searched through voluminous full texts.

- **Newspaper and magazine articles**, typically in the Canadian Business and Consumer Affairs database. That's an easy and obvious source and it was used to differentiate spellings: How many professional journalists write *marvellous* vs. *marvelous*?
- **Blogs**. Tricky, because it can be difficult or impossible to prove that the writer is a Canadian English speaker. To sidestep the problem, I downloaded and analyzed the entire archives of one candidate from every category of the 2007 Canadian Blog Awards.
- **Legal rulings**. I downloaded and analyzed all federal, provincial, and territorial rulings from 2007 that were available on the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) database.
- **Government Web sites** – specifically, sites concerning driver's licences (or are they licenses?).
- **Company names**: Are there any *tyre* shops in Canada? Any shopping *centers*?

Paper research

For all these categories, I read actual printed documents. For literature and periodicals, I flipped through hundreds of pages looking for telltale spellings. I looked mostly at right-hand pages, so I know for a fact that half the possible data set was ignored. I also did not read every word of what I flipped through (setting aside for the moment that the eyes read by jumping across a line of text, hence not “every word” is read). I know I missed a lot of data, but you shouldn’t underestimate how much data I managed to amass. The flip-through method is a *survey*.

- **Literary award-winners.** I inspected scores of winners of the Governor General’s Literary Awards, the Giller Prize, and several smaller literary awards.
- **Bilingual dictionaries**, that is, dictionaries translating to or from English that were published in Canada (presumed to be using Canadian English). I searched for typical Canadian English spellings.
- **Periodicals.** I surveyed dozens of issues of a range of periodicals, from *Queen’s Quarterly* to *Canadian Architect* to *CMAJ*. Recent issues were canvassed, except when very old issues (circa 1987) were available for comparison.

Quick results

In nearly all sources, some of the classic peculiarities of Canadian spelling are strongly upheld. *Centre*, *organize*, and *neighbour* are all spelled that way by most people – and the numbers are hugely in favour of those spellings. Those classic peculiarities are consistent across the board everywhere from personal blogs to award-winning fiction. The barbarians are not at the gates: These *canonical* Canadian spellings are widespread and stable.

So are Canadian spelling choices like *tire* and *curb*. In fact, we tend to prefer American spellings like these for objects that are in some way technical (*carburetor*; *aluminum* with one *I*) and for medical procedures (*anesthesia*). Nonetheless, payments are delivered by *cheque* (originally British), not by *check* (still American).

Things change slightly with proper names, as with names of businesses. There are surprisingly large numbers of *Centers* willing to do business in Canada, as are a hefty number of *Labor*-related concerns. Nonetheless, the majority usage is *Centre* and *Labour*. Hence, this imaginary headline is still possible only in Canada: *Parts and labour 50% off at Coquitlam Tire Centre*.

Where the surprises begin to pop up are in the uncommon words and formations. Does *marvellous* have two *L*s? Only sometimes. Three *T*s in *targetted*? Again, only sometimes. An added *e* in words like *unhingeing* and *moveable*? Not usually. In other words, there really is no consensus on doubled consonants (and additional *E*s). This is a problem for a descriptivist like me; the only advice I can give is to pick one variation and stay loyal to it. (Perhaps betraying my biases, I prefer the British-origin double-consonant version. Does that make me anti-American?)

Once you start forming compound words, confusion becomes the norm. *Fibre* is a noncontroversial Canadian spelling, but what about cables made from optical fibre? Are they *fibroptic* (that *-reo-* sequence is troublesome), *fibre optic* (it may need a hyphen), *fiberoptic*, or *fiber optic*? How about glass fibre: Is it *fiberglass*, *fiberglas*, *fibreglass*, or *fibreglas*? It turns out that, in the periodicals I surveyed, all spellings are used in similar numbers. (Although *fibre-optic* has the highest usage of any of those variants, it's likely being used as a hyphenated adjective. Among unhyphenated spellings, *fibre optic* beats everything.)

Detailed results

You'll be able to download my full data set online (at en-CA.org/data). Here's a detailed summary of my findings.

Journalism

I carried out computer searches of thousands of journalistic articles published in Canadian magazines and newspapers. This was *not* a Google search; it was a precisely targetted search of the proprietary Canadian Business and Current Affairs database, which comprises over 200 periodicals.

There were some complications in this search process. For one, the database silently corrects your spelling: Search for *colour* and you are also, without knowing it, searching for *color*. After an inquiry, I was given the command to search on explicit spellings (type an asterisk after the term in question; also applies to phrases inside quotation marks).

My research covered two eras: 1987, when computers were uncommon and Canadian English spelling was obscure and unheralded, and 2002–2007, when everybody had a computer, most computers had spellcheckers, and numerous Canadian English dictionaries had been published. We can track the evolution of spellings over a 20-year period, though admittedly we aren't tracking them month by month.

To introduce some kind of scientific validity to the survey, or at least the appearance of such validity, I deemed my findings persuasive or dependable if

one spelling occurred more often than another – but only to two significant digits. For this book, that means I acted as though the two lowest digits (the ones and tens) aren't known or are zero and only considered the third-lowest digit and above (hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands).

As such, any pair of spellings with fewer than 200 total occurrences does not present reliable data. More specifically, either spelling has to have 100 or more occurrences (99 vs. 101 or 199 vs. 1 don't count). All other findings are merely suggestive, although they may be of interest anyway: A real finding of 199 occurrences of a certain spelling vs. one occurrence of a variant spelling may not be scientifically sound, but it shows that the latter spelling is in the minority.

The CBCA database includes some American wire copy appearing in Canadian publications. A smattering of American and French-language periodicals are included. There may be other excerpts and quotations in articles that otherwise use nothing but Canadian spellings. I viewed that contamination as insignificant, but I can't prove it was. For some words and phrases, I limited searches to Canadian publications only and/or English-language publications only.

I surveyed about 250 separate words and phrases. Most are what is known in linguistics as *minimal pairs* – words or phrases with the tiniest possible difference of interest, e.g., *draftsman/draughtsman* (where only the *f* and *ugh* differ).

The results are rather surprising. While not every spelling is represented in significant numbers, every classic Canadian spelling is in there somewhere. The exceptions are either spelling of *valorize*, with or without a *U* (we don't use the *U*), and the allegedly Canadian spelling of *yogourt* (zero occurrences for the latter in the 2002–2007 corpus – see discussion below). This indicates that

each of the surveyed Canadian spellings are used by professional journalists and editors. Some archetypal Canadian spellings crush the competition, including *centre*, which occurs, as a common or proper noun, three times as often as *center*. *Program* is ten times more common than *programme*.

But many U.S. spellings are used almost as often as Canadian ones, and a few British spellings creep in. Disregarding significant digits for a moment, it's possible to find all-American usages like *analog*, *center/Center* (common or proper noun), *checkbook*, and *fiberglass*. British spellings like *foetal*, *aeons*, *hypoglycaemia*, and *orientated* are also found, typically much less often (e.g., *accessorise* occurs only twice in the periods I checked). A few choices are rare and occur with almost equal frequency in Canadian, American, or British variants, such as *artistic licence* and *poetic licence* – both terms are rare but, when they occur, they are spelled with a *C* or an *S* about as often in all dialects.

Some interesting statistics

Spellings that beat others by more than a factor of 100 (2002–2007):

1. *accessorize*
2. *chequebook journalism* (rather than *checkbook journalism*)
3. *half-hour program* and *sponsorship program*
4. *drafting*

Then there's *maneuver*, always a tricky case. The official Canadian spelling is *manoeuvre*, which beat every other spelling, but if we're just comparing the American *maneuver* with the nonsensical pseudo-British *manoeuvre*,

American *maneuver* is well over 100 times as common.

The same criteria, but from 1987:

1. *aging* (not *ageing*)
2. *artifacts* (not *artefacts*)
3. *drafting*
4. *fetus* (not *foetus*)
5. *sabre-rattling*
6. *skeptical*
7. *yogurt* (not the darling of the Canadian Oxford, *yogourt*)

On a smaller scale, what spellings beat out the competition by a factor of 10 or more (but not 100 or more)? There are a few words and phrases for which that is true in both time periods surveyed (2002–2007 and 1987):

1. *Centre* (proper noun)
2. *cheque*
3. *curb*
4. *diarrhea*
5. *draft*
6. *encyclopedia*
7. *manoeuvre*
8. *oriented*
9. *panelists*
10. *program*

Periodicals

I chose small-market or technical publications, and *all* of them used across-the-board Canadian spellings – everything from *storey*, *theatre*, *dialogue*, *mould*, and *colour-coded* found in *Canadian Architect* to *characterizing axiomatizable classes* found in *Canadian Mathematical Bulletin*. (But that publication seems to prefer *fibers* as a spelling.)

Editors were divided on the use of doubled consonants, preferring usages like *focused* in some cases (*Canadian Architect* again) or *traveller* and *modelled* in others (*Queen's Quarterly*).

Surely the most delicious finding from this set was the word *Canadianization*, seen in *Canadian Historical Review*.

Literature

The nationalist, subtly anti-American Canadian literary elite can breathe a sigh of relief: Canadian spelling is so entrenched in Canadian literature as to be unassailable.

Across the entire spectrum of award-worthy fiction and nonfiction I surveyed (over 100 books that were nominated for or actually won a literary award), core Canadian spelling is rock solid. That holds true for big-name authors, small-time poets, big-name publishers owned by foreign conglomerates, and small-time houses that barely manage a couple of books a year. It's true of literary translations from Canadian French (that is, Quebec French) into Canadian English. It's true of picture books, atlases, cookbooks, biographies,

and novels. It's true across the board.

All the telltale Canadian spellings you would anticipate are readily discernible: *centimetres, traveller, colour, digitized, axe, endeavour, cozier, synchronized swimming, self-centredness, flat tires, paralyzed*. It's all there.

The exceptions are genuinely exceptional, and tend to be found in U.S. editions of Canadian authors. I found only one consistent case: Alice Munro's *Runaway* uses American spellings all the way through.

Now, as with any large sample (many books with millions of words), there will be a few *outliers*, or data points at the edges of the trend. Medical terminology seems to travel between the United States and Great Britain without a stopover for refuelling at Gander (*trachea, esophagus, caesarean, leukemias*). It isn't clear what's for dinner, *lasagne* or *lasagna*.

What about Canadian-nationalist writers, like Linda McQuaig and Maude Barlow? They use Canadian spelling across the board. McQuaig and her editors are even careful enough to preserve foreign spellings in proper names, like *U.S. defense secretary*.

Former prime ministers? They haven't written that many books, but the trend may be toward Canadian spelling. For example, Brian Mulroney's *Where I Stand* uses *organization, mobilize, recognized, and aluminum* (all of which are ambiguously also American spellings).

How about Canada's most American authors, like Douglas Coupland (born and raised in Canada) and William Gibson (born and raised in the United States)? Gibson's books are all originally published in the United States and consistently use U.S. spellings. (Actually, there's one inconsistency – *colourized* in *All Tomorrow's Parties*.)

Coupland is another story. His books, perhaps not surprisingly in retrospect, mix and match spellings in accordance with the nationality of the publisher. Canadian-published books like *City of Glass*, *Terry*, *The Gum Thief*, and *JPod* use clear Canadian spelling choices (*neighbourhoods*, *homogenization and pasteurized global taste*, *kilometres*, *favourite*, *pre-modelled castles*, *practise* [verb]). U.S.-published books, including *Girlfriend in a Coma* and *Shampoo Planet*, use across-the-board U.S. spellings. Michael Lewis's playscript of Coupland's *Life After God* appears to use Canadian spelling (*colourful*).

Blogs

It isn't easy to determine a blog author's nationality, which, in any case, might not correspond to the dialect the author learned in childhood. A British or American immigrant to Canada may be Canadian by naturalization, but that person might not write with Canadian spellings.

Nonetheless, it is possible to identify a subset of blogs whose authors reside in Canada. Blog awards, and Web awards generally, have little credibility, given that they're largely self-selected and draw unrepresentatively from a giant pool of prospects. (The number of actual nominees and finalists is tiny compared to the range of possible nominees.)

But for the purposes of this book, the Canadian Blog Awards proved genuinely useful. I looked at the complete archives from one entrant in each category of the 2007 instalment of those awards. I did not attempt to be representative; I made selections almost at random. Blogs without full-year archives were excluded. In all, 23 Canadian blogs were surveyed, comprising more than 3.1 million words without HTML markup.

I did quite a lot of inspecting to make sure that the words I examined were not overtly drawn from U.S. sources (as in block quotations from American news articles), but there is inevitably some U.S. contamination in a source like this one. Blog authors who listed any kind of method were contacted; I asked about their nationality and where they learned English, but not a single one of them responded.

And guess what: These “amateur” writers, often impugned by old media because they don’t have editors looking over their shoulders, write Canadian English just as consistently as old-media writers do. Exactly three verbs were written with *-ise* endings rather than *-ize* (*realise*, *recognise*, *scrutinise*). But nearly 200 verb forms used *-ize*, including *subsidize*, *polarizes*, *unmotorized*, and *well-publicized*.

Only nine nouns used the *-isation* spelling (*civilisations*, *gelatinisation*, *globalisation*, *improvisation*, *legitimation*, *mobilisations*, *organisation*, *realisation*, *visualisation*) compared to 75 nouns ending in *-ization* (including *federalization*, *rationalizations*, *tribalization*).

The dead-giveaway Canadian words – *centre*, *colour*, *cozy*, and the like – are vastly preferred by bloggers. Nobody in my sample used British spellings like *kerb*, *cosy*, *furor*, *programme*, *tyre*, or *diarrhoea*. Bloggers pay their bills by writing *cheques* about six times as often as *checks*. But *licence* as a noun barely has an edge over *license* (13 occurrences to 8); *offence* as a noun has lost the battle to *offense*, but only just (25 to 33). And bloggers are *skeptical* about writing *sceptical* with a *K* (69 for *K*, 54 for *C*). The *manoeuvre/fibre* pair is also troublesome – barely anyone writes any version of those words (even in phrases like *fibre optic*), and no spelling predominates.

Centre is a tricky word for this group. When used as a proper noun, *Centre* doesn't exist while *Center* does (274 uses). That could be a case of preserving the original spelling of a proper noun. Used as a common noun, *centre* outnumbers *center* by about a third. Verb tenses tend toward American – *centered* (23 instances) rather than *centred* (two).

Bloggers wear 2½ times as much *jewelry* as *jewellery*. These writers are *oriented* toward *interpretive* dancing, not bothering with the British *-ated/-ative* ending most of the time. (They don't use either variant all that often – put together, every permutation of *oriented* and *interpretive* was used a mere 29 times.)

Bloggers seem to want to average out their extra *Es*. There isn't much data here: Nobody writes *cringeing* or *infringeing* (both of which are misspellings anyway), but nobody writes any of the other *-ingeing* verbs, either, like *bingeing*. Bloggers wielded seven *axe*s and only one *ax*. They seem to have left the *analogue* world behind – for them it's an *analog* world, but only just (a mere five instances). Even taking into account the confounding fact that a leading blog-software platform is called Movable Type, nobody at all wrote *moveable* – but they didn't write *movable* in its usual sense, either.

Doubled consonants are not preferred. Verbs ending in *-eted* (164, including *targeted*, *trumpeted*, *multifaceted*) hugely outnumber those ending *-etted* (only three relevant words: *sulphuretted*, *cossetted*, *targetted*). *Focused* is 20 times as common as *focussed*. There was no reliable data on preferences for *-ll-* vs. *-l-*.

Bloggers are not really any worse at “spelling Canadian” than, say, newspaper writers are.

Court decisions

Justice must not merely be done, it must be seen to be done in correct Canadian spelling. Impressively, most court judgements use strict Canadian orthography.

I looked at every federal, provincial, and territorial ruling dating from 2007 that was listed on the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) database. The corpus I analyzed comprised about 4.8 million words.

Not surprisingly for judges and lawyers, words ending in *-ize* were rampant – about 75 discrete words (*constitutionalize, institutionalize, verbalize*). (I suppose that isn't "rampant" after all, since bloggers used almost as many such words.) There was more of an adherence to British tradition, though, than the bloggers showed, with about a dozen *-ise* spellings (*commercialise, exorcise, recognise*). Some of those, like *aquacise*, might actually be expressed in French quotations and are not real English words.

There's a minor trend toward doubled consonants – *totalling, counselling, empanelling, and imperilling*, for example (the complete list of *-ll* words in this corpus), or *rivetted* and *gazetted* (all the *-tt-* found). But the Canadian judiciary can achieve *fulfillment* with two *L*s or one, though the double-*L* spelling has a minor lead.

Banking uses *cheques* in all but one case. *A licence* is a thing three times as often as a *license* is. There's a single solitary use of *licence* as a verb. (Canadian uses *license* as a verb.)

Judges can't decide if they want word-final *E* or not: *Axe* is more popular than *ax*, but *analog* beats *analogue*. They have cause for *skepticism* as often as they do for *scepticism* (a mere seven occurrences each).

The strangest usage is clearly *center*, which, whether used as a common or proper noun or in a phrasal verb (*center on*), is noticeably frequent at over 100 occurrences. Many of the proper-name usages should indeed not be changed, as the Simon Wiesenthal Center is not the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, but those are unusual cases. *Centre* in all forms is used about 360 times. A substantial lead, but *center* is clearly not “incorrect” as far as judges are concerned. For that matter, neither is *programme*, though it’s spelled that way 40 times less often than *program*.

Company names

I don’t see why anybody would use a printed phone book anymore. I certainly didn’t. I relied on the proprietary, hard-to-use, technically backward Canada411 database, which produced equivocal results.

In simple terms, there aren’t that many company names in Canada that use American or British spellings, but there are a few cases – over 4,500 *centers*, for example, and at least seven *tyre* shops. (Two businesses named Nokian Tyres were excluded; that’s a trade name, which, you could argue, should not be changed. Of course, it’s possible to take that endorsement of corporate misspellings a bit too far.)

Businesses named *Color* outnumber those named *Colour* by about a third (693 to 462). Another telltale Canadian spelling, *labour* (“parts and labour guarantee”), is easy enough to search for, but the converse spelling *labor* is too hard to differentiate from longer words like “laboratory” and French “laboratoire.” Hence I have no credible results for those tokens.

Government Web sites

This was the smallest survey of all: What do provinces and territories call a permit to drive a motor vehicle? Is it a *driver's licence* or a *driver's license*? (Or even a *driving licence*?)

According to provincial and territorial Web sites (or, as in the case of B.C. and Manitoba, the sites of provincially-mandated insurers), the answer is *driver's licence*. That's the strict Canadian spelling and it holds true everywhere except Nunavut (*driver's license*) and Prince Edward Island, which uses both spellings on the same page (and also includes *offense* as a noun).

Dictionaries

Here I'm talking about bilingual or regional dictionaries, not general-purpose dictionaries like the Canadian Oxford.

It's surprisingly difficult to find a bilingual Canadian dictionary that even pretends to use Canadian English spellings. This, in fact, is a growth area in Canadian nationalism, if you view Canadian orthography as nationalistic. There's a gap in the market for a dictionary that translates between Canadian English and something else.

Renata Isajlovic's *Québécois–English English–Québécois Dictionary & Phrasebook* has a New York publisher. It uses *memorize*, *organize*, and *neighbouring*, which qualifies handily as Canadian English.

Jean-Claude Corbeil's *French/English Visual Dictionary* (1987)

covers several of the bases, if not all of them, listing *polarizing filter* (clearly not typical British usage) but also *color analyzer*; *colour analyser* and *color filter set*; *colour filter set* and *honor tiles*; *honour tiles* (with semicolons and alternate spellings included in each of those listings). Lasagna is *lasagna* as far as this dictionary is concerned.

Now let's talk about aboriginal languages, or at least Cree. Arok Wolvengrey's *Cree Words* (2007) uses straight-up Canadian – *alphabetized* in a definition, and *colour*, *realize*, *organize*, and *neighbour* as headwords. Earle H. Waugh's *Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary* pulls a Corbeil and tries to have it both ways or several ways, listing *utilized* but *honoring*; *realized* but *color or colour* (those three words in one listing in the original); *organize* but *honor or honour* (again, a single listing); and of course *marvellous or marvelous* (single listing).

There's more than one form of Canadian English, and the regional varieties have their own literature. L. Falk's *English Language in Nova Scotia* (1999) sticks to mainstream mixed U.S./U.K. spellings with *pronounceable*; *favourable* and *favourably*; *emphasized*; and *much-criticized*. Oddly, M.H. Scargill's classic *Modern Canadian English Usage* (1974) had no telltale spellings I could find. T.K. Pratt's *PEI Sayings* used *favourite* and *centre*, which could simply be British but are, Pratt told me, meant to be strictly Canadian.

The online technical thesaurus GrandDictionnaire.com translates among English, French, Spanish, and Latin, though not in every combination. It accepts American or British spellings, but does not give equivalent results for each. Some words aren't found at all (*marvellous*) or are found only in a scientific context (*marvelous* found only as *marvelous spatuletail*, a hummingbird). *Neighboring* gives only one result (*neighboring pixel*), while *neighbouring* returns that result plus five others. You'd better write the

Canadian *fetal* if you want a decent set of results (20 more than British *foetal*). *Authorized* returns about six times as many hits as *authorised*.

Of particular interest is a textbook for English-language learners of Spanish, *Intercambios: Spanish for Global Communication*. One of the coauthors is Stephen Henighan, an assistant professor at the University of Guelph and a frequent critic of Canadian literature. Henighan's [article](#) "Translated from the American" in *Geist* (Fall 2005) explains how Henighan and his partners changed many of the cultural references in the original U.S. *Intercambios* textbook to references that make sense in Canada:

It was easy to change "Hi, I'm from New Jersey" to "Hi, I'm from Saskatchewan," but anything more serious required a thorough overhaul. The dialogues in the U.S. textbook followed a student from Wisconsin in her travels through the Hispanic world....

Canada has no neutral Midwest. Whichever region I chose as my protagonist's home, other Canadians would feel alienated. After wracking my brains, I decided that the best compromise was to weave new dialogues around three central characters of different ethnic backgrounds, one each from Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

The Canadianized version that Henighan and his partners wrote also dared to use the metric system and to mention Cuba. But how was it written? Did it use Canadian English? Sort of.

Words like *program* and *recognizable* (and *Canadianized*!) are in there. The students featured in the book use *traveller's cheques* (another great Canadianism). *Practise* is a verb and *practice* is a noun (sometimes used as an adjective: *self-scoring practice exercises*). But

yogurt is the dessert, not *yogourt*, and double consonants are apparently too British for these Spanish-learners (*targeting*, *focuses*).

The *yogourt* myth

Katherine Barber of Oxford is known for her seldom-changing repertoire of anecdotes (who knew that jam-filled donuts were called “Bismarcks”?), but only one of her oft-repeated myths actually bothers me. That is her contention that the Canadian spelling of *yogurt* is in fact *yogourt*. *It’s written right there on the package – and it even works in both languages!*

The problem is I cannot verify the assertion that *yogourt* is even a common spelling, let alone a dominant one, as the Canadian Oxford asserts (going so far as to list *yogurt* and *yoghurt* as mere variants).

Of course I checked yogurt containers. I found five brands each using the spelling *yogurt* (Organic Meadow, Yoso, President’s Choice, Stonyfield Farm, YoBaby) and the spelling *yogourt* (Liberté [by far the largest single user of that spelling], Saugeen County, Everity Dairy Cooperative, Hewitt’s). That’s a tie.

Court decisions never mentioned either spelling. Bloggers used *yogurt* seven times (three times in a single recipe apparently pasted from a U.S. source) and *yogourt* exactly once. Only one company is listed in the Canada 411 directory with the *Yogourt* spelling, while 22 companies use *Yogurt* – and that latter does not include chains, often foreign-owned, like TCBY or Yogen Früz, whose full names, on the rare occasion they are listed, may include the spelling *Yogurt*. (TCBY stands for the Country’s Best Yogurt.)

Journalists barely ever use the spelling *yogourt* – in 1987, only four times, and from 2002–2007, 518 times. (Both figures are based on strict English-only

searches, avoiding contamination by French.) But the *yogurt* spelling was used 633 times in 1987 and 11,784 times in 2002–2007 (again, English-only).

My data disprove Barber's thesis that *yogourt* is the "Canadian" spelling. At best it is a *variant* spelling. You can feel good about dropping the second *O* in *yogurt*, which will have the side effect of precluding bilingual readers from silently hearing the pronunciation "yohguur" as they read.

The Coquitlam effect: Why your spellchecker isn't going to help you

In the 21st century, why learn by heart rote spelling when you can just type it into a computer and spellcheck?

This is a book about spelling, and I'm here to help you spell better, or at least in a more Canadian manner. But we live in the 21st century and we have certain tools at our disposal, most importantly the spellchecker. When writing, you don't have to remember everyword and you don't have to page through a printed dictionary; your computer can help you.

Or so you think. In truth, it *won't* help you – not if you're trying to write fluent Canadian English. Considerable experimentation and research has led me to conclude that not a single spellchecker in common use – very much including the one in Microsoft Word for Windows – gives correct advice when writing Canadian English. You can't trust your computer.

Why doesn't it work? It isn't just because the software doesn't have Canadian spellings in its dictionary. I have a name for the unreliability of spellcheckers for Canadian writers – *the Coquitlam effect*, by analogy to another phenomenon I'll discuss shortly.

Setting you up to fail

A word processor essentially turns you into a typesetter in a way that never

happened with typewriters or with early word processors that were attached to dot-matrix or “letter-quality” printers. Unless you’ve had special training, word processing invites you to get a million little things wrong – and get a few very large things wrong, too. By default, word processors are complex; they will not prevent you from making mistakes.

“Default” is the operative word here. A *default* is a setting the program uses in the absence of your own decision. The first time you use a word processor, if you’re really attentive you’ll see a range of default settings. Somebody decided what your page size is, what your margins are, what font you’d like, and what colours to use (typically black on white).

But there are defaults you can’t see, and one of them is language. It’s true that some modern word processors use a status bar to indicate the language in use, but you aren’t looking there when you’re writing. In many other cases there simply is no indication of the language the computer thinks you’re using. Now, if you Google around for Web pages on this topic, you’ll find that most of them talk about the language of the interface (what language are the menus and dialogue boxes written in?) or the language of the document you’re writing. In the latter case, they’re mostly talking about something like French vs. English, or Arabic vs. Chinese.

If your operating system (your whole computer, in effect) works in English, then your word processor probably will, too – either because it automatically senses the operating-system setting or because you bought or downloaded a single-language version of the software. There’s a trend now for people who speak “minority” languages to run their computers in English, but use spellcheckers and other language tools in their own language. But those are advanced users who realize there’s a difference between the language of the word-processing interface and the language they want to write in.

For English-speakers, though, everything “just works” in English. Your whole computer operating system is English, your word processor is English, all the documents you write are English. Everything seems to be working as you expect (if you even thought about it enough to expect something in the first place), so the default use of English isn’t even visible to you.

But here’s the problem: Just as a speaker of, say, Welsh or Maltese can set up a program to spellcheck and hyphenate in those languages even if the rest of the interface is in English, you as an English-speaker can set the program to check your spelling using a certain *variant* of English. All your menus and other interface features might use U.S. English, but you can go ahead and write in, say, Canadian English.

For Microsoft Word for Windows Vista, there are 16 possible English variants, from Jamaica to South Africa and, yes, Canada. But what’s the default? For Canadian systems, it’s almost always U.S. English. (For U.K. systems, it’s U.K. English, but you probably aren’t using a U.K. system.)

This means the first time you use your word processor, you will almost certainly be writing in U.S. English as far as the software is concerned. That will also be true the next time you use the software, and the time after that, and every other time unless and until you go out of your way to permanently set the language of your text to Canadian English.

Have you done that? Probably not. I doubt it ever occurred to you. And it isn’t necessarily an easy thing to do. The setting might be buried in a preferences screen. Or bugs in the program might cause the language designation to spontaneously switch back to U.S. or U.K. English. Or you might change the language without realizing the change applies only to whatever you type *after that point*.

Or your software just won't give you the option to change the dialect of English.

There's another wrinkle: Your software may not use any specific nation's English dialect. It may instead use "international English." It's an undefined, and usually meaningless, amalgam of dialects that's intended to be innocuous but ends up infuriating anyone who actually uses a distinct English variant. The desktop-publishing software that used to massively dominate the industry, Quark Xpress, offers a so-called Canadian version that lets you spellcheck in "Canadian French" and "International English," which does not exist.

All told, when you're typing away in your software, that software may not know you're using English at all. If it does, it probably assumes you want to write American. But if you're reading this book, you *don't* want to write American. The "errors" the software goes on to "correct" may not be errors at all. I've got proof.

No spellchecker gets Canadian spelling right

That's the result of my testing. No computer spellchecker in common use consistently permits Canadian spellings and flags other spellings as incorrect. In other words, none of the software tested will consistently steer you in the right direction. If you want to spell Canadian in all your writing, these spellcheckers are not going to help.

I didn't test every spellchecker in existence, but my cohorts and I (see Acknowledgements) thoroughly investigated all the big ones:

- Microsoft Word: 2002 and 2007 for Windows

- WordPerfect X3 for Windows
- OpenOffice 3.0 (for Macintosh, but all versions share the same spellcheckers)

All the above have explicit settings for Canadian English.

My cohorts and I also tested a few select software applications that check spelling in “English” without any national or other qualification. I intentionally limited my testing of such software, since by definition it doesn’t accommodate Canadian spelling. These programs are included here mostly for comparison.

- Macintosh system spellchecker
- Adobe InDesign CS3

I did not check Microsoft Word for Macintosh, as its English variants are limited to Australian, U.K. and U.S. Nor was Quark Xpress tested.

I wrote a corpus of over 200 sentences that use words with national spelling differences. Some of those words were actually phrases, like *sponsorship program(me)*. Some others were known to be incorrect and were a test of overregularization (see below). The full list of test sentences is available online at en-CA.org/data; feel free to adapt and modify them, with attribution.

For software with national-dialect options, the full corpus was checked three times, with Canadian, U.S., and U.K. settings correctly enabled. For other software, the corpus was checked once. The following results relate to Canadian spellings only.

Results

The only words that *all* spellcheckers noticed as errors in Canadian English were these: *fiberglas* and *fibreglas*. There: Two words. (This is the base list.)

Two more flagged words, *budgetted* and *targetted*, are debatable even in Canada. Another flagged set is wrong everywhere – *unenforcable*, *dingey*, *cringeing*, *unchangeing*, *unhingeing*, *valourize*.

There were two others, but they were ringers added to the list to check overregularizations. One was *nacer* – it's actually spelled *nacre* and it means mother-of-pearl. *Chancer* (a misspelling of *chancre* as in “chancre sore”) has a rare British sense of that spelling that wasn't being tested. Both those words were flagged as incorrect – which they are, but everywhere, not merely in Canada.

What about Microsoft? Most people don't use Macs or open-source software or desktop publishing; most people just type away in Microsoft Word. You shouldn't expect much help there, either. All Microsoft spellcheckers *failed to catch* the misspelled words in the base list plus the following Canadian misspellings, several of which are debatable uses of doubled consonants (marked with ‡):

- *artifacts*
- *ax*
- *carolers* ‡
- *cataloger*
- *checkbook*
- *cossetted* ‡
- *disheveled* ‡

- *draughting*
- *empaneled* ‡
- *fiber optic, fiberoptic, fibreoptic; fiberglass* (as a set, all *fiber-* words are tricky cases)
- *honourary*
- *maneuver, manœuvre, manoeuver*
- *marvelous* ‡
- *molds*
- *neighbors*
- *pajama* ‡ (vs. *pyjama*; debatable)
- *panelists* ‡
- *paycheck*
- *rancor*
- *rigorous* (always wrong everywhere)
- *saber, saber rattling*
- *skillful* ‡
- *somber, somberly*
- *specter*
- *sulfur*
- *unraveled* ‡
- *willful* ‡

Microsoft Word also flagged the following questionable cases as misspelled:

- *anesthesia* and *archeology* (Canadian Oxford insists on *-ae-*, but this is not widely followed in my reading of real-world usage)
- *jewelry* (*jewellery* preferred; this is a bugbear of mine, and I admit that its bugbear status is why I'm labelling it as questionable)
- *dancable* (as in “a more danceable sound on her new CD”) is clearly wrong everywhere, but *salable* (as in “return the product to store in salable condition”) seems defensible
- *technicolour* (only Canadian Oxford permits this spelling and only in lower case)

Other findings

All software applications that let you select a national spelling variant were roughly equal in their numbers of false positives (software says it's a misspelling when it isn't; in truth, the word is spelled correctly) and false negatives (software says it is not a misspelling; in truth, the word is misspelled).

All applications of all kinds were almost equally likely to authorize the use of multiple national variants even if there is really only one option in Canadian English. For example, all applications tested let you write *analysing*, *cosy*, and *artistic license* in Canadian, but those words are actually spelled *analyzing*, *cozy*, and *artistic licence*. Even really obvious misspellings, like *center* (American), sail through the big applications, including Microsoft Word. They let you mix 'n' match.

There is a modest trend toward permitting British spellings more often than American ones. Hence *aeon* (for *eon*), *programme*, and *foetal* and *foetid* sail through all tested software.

There weren't a lot of abbreviations tested (only two), but not a single software application recognized the Canadian abbreviation *Pte.* for *private* (military rank). All applications marked *Pte.* incorrect in U.S. English, while InDesign marked *Pt.* incorrect in everything *but* U.S. – which is odd, since *Pt.* is an American abbreviation.

What about trickier, more contentious, or ambiguous cases – words with viable alternate spellings? I take a hardline approach here: If the Canadian Oxford lists the spelling as second or third in a list, then it isn't correct. If a spelling is listed as any kind of variant (including “especially U.S.”), then it isn't correct, either. Dictionaries are popularity contests: The first spelling listed is the right one.

And here is where spellcheckers are the most dangerous, as they permit nearly any kind of spelling variation – *ax* or *axe*, *fulfilment* or *fulfillment*, *jewellery* or *jewelry*. (Only one of each pair is correct in Canadian: *axe*, *fulfillment*, *jewellery*.)

If you accept that the Canadian spelling of *fibre* uses *-re*, your software will usually agree with you (all but InDesign and WordPerfect agree with the *-re* spelling). But what about *fibre optic*? Is that two words or one? The only spelling given a consistent pass by all spellcheckers is *fiber optic* – but only as a variant in the Canadian and British dictionaries. Every variant of *fibre optic* (*-er* or *-re*, one word or two, hyphen or no hyphen) gets a pass in one spellchecker or another.

Some words that even very adept spellers have to sit there and think about also tend to be given a pass. How do you spell *maneuver*? (That spelling there is just one of the options.)

- It's originally French; should we just use their spelling (*manoeuvre*)?

(Isn't that correctly written as *manœuvre*, with an *oe* digraph, *œ*?)

- Couldn't we put *-oeu-* or *-eu-* in the middle and *-er* or *-re* at the end? Isn't that four possibilities? How many of them are correct?

In Canadian English, *all* of them are deemed correct, depending on the software you're using. (In fact, the only spelling marked as a mistake across the board in U.S., U.K., and Canadian English is *manœuvre*. Every other variant is accepted or rejected, in unpredictable sequence, by spellcheckers, no matter what dialect you've selected.)

For the record, the Canadian Oxford spelling is *manoeuvre*, which implies that odd-looking verb forms like *manoeuvring* are also correct. (*Manoeuvrability* is explicitly listed as a correct spelling by Oxford.)

The Cupertino effect

If you can't rely on your computer to help you write Canadian English correctly, what's going to happen?

There's a well-known phenomenon in the casual linguistics research that is published on blogs. (It's only "casual" because it isn't peer-reviewed and because the topics, like some other bloggable topics, are too small to warrant a full scientific paper. Nonetheless, many of the writers of such blogs have Ph.D.s in linguistics and their work is credible.) The *Cupertino effect* refers to a false correction put in place by a spellchecker. It has that name because one specific misspelling of *cooperation*, "cooperatino," was flagged as a misspelling in early versions of Microsoft Word for Windows. In another manifestation, *cooperation* was flagged as an error, while *co-operation* would not be.

One of the available replacement words was Cupertino, the name of the city in California where Apple (“Computer”) Inc. is headquartered. If you weren’t paying attention, you could approve the correction of “cooperatino” into “Cupertino.” If you really weren’t paying attention, you could approve the correction of *all* instances of “cooperatino” into “Cupertino.”

Thus the Cupertino effect: If you mistakenly allow a spellchecker to replace a word with the wrong word, your document may be strewn with incomprehensible pellets of non-meaning.

But at least you’d *notice the mistake* if you read the document. Actually, any English-speaker would notice the mistake. This phenomenon is not quite like the tendency of spellcheckers to leave incorrect words in a document because they happen to be correctly spelled in another context. (I have trouble with writing *ratio* as *ration*. A spellchecker won’t catch that for me. Ditto another real example of mine, *outweight* when I meant *outweigh*.) Those are actually quite hard to spot, particularly when you’re double-checking your own copy. Still, “Cupertino” in the middle of a sentence would probably jump out at you.

But spellcheckers do not know how to handle Canadian English. Much of the time, they’ll let you use the wrong word no problem as long as it’s a word that some other country uses. Spellcheckers are the single biggest threat to Canadian spelling. They’re supposed to be helping you, but if they are even aware you want to use Canadian forms in the first place, spellcheckers blithely authorize all sorts of mild misspellings.

Here’s a real-world example, from a CBC submission on television and “new media”:

It is important to recognise that underlying the current

environment is a shift towards personalisation and control, and not a major shift towards new ways of consuming broadcasting. Consumers want what they want, when they want it and where they want it (i.e., personalization). Some Canadians are using the Internet to personalize their TV and radio experiences, but it is not the only way to do this.

In one simple paragraph, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation writes the words *personalize* and *personalization* as, variously, *personalisation*, *personalization*, and *personalize*. *Recognise* is in there for good measure. (CBC refused to answer a question about how that paragraph was put together.)

Those misspellings are hard to spot, and the writers who would most benefit from a rigorous spellcheck are the ones least confident in their own abilities to spell properly. They're also the least confident in second-guessing a "really smart" computer, and the least able to copy-edit a document for consistency.

Alternatively, you or whoever set up your computer didn't realize there were different language versions available, so your system defaults to U.S. English (or, less likely, British) and adamantly insists that *neighbours* or *cheques* is a misspelling. It's just easier to let the software "correct" your "errors" for you.

I'm sorry to sound a bit dramatic here, but the effect of computer spellchecking is denationalization (not denationalisation) by stealth. It erases the Canadian border with the U.S. It turns back the geologic clock to a kind of Jules Verne science-fiction scenario in which the British Isles and the United States of Canada are a single land mass. It reunites our country with the same-sex parents that gave us our English language.

In what I call the Coquitlam effect, when writing Canadian English your software might indeed be doing something to your spelling, but “checking” is not what it’s doing. It permits you to intermingle different national variants, allowing most of them at least some of the time. Under the Coquitlam effect, you can set up your software any way you want, but nothing you do will induce the software to correct your spelling according to Canadian rules.

There’s little or nothing you can do about it: Your software may not acknowledge Canadian English exists, or may frustrate your attempts to set your writing to Canadian, or just let you use British or American spellings anyway.

This phenomenon has been noted in only one other place I could find: The Editors’ Association of Canada’s *Editing Canadian English* (2000) notes that spellcheckers “do not reflect the essentially Canadian practice of selecting from both British and American forms.”

What about open-source software?

You are pretty much stuck with the spellchecker your program gives you. It is possible with some programs (notably WordPerfect) to add and delete words from the dictionary, but in practice, you aren’t going to bother.

In theory there’s an alternative now – the OpenOffice “suite” of applications. It isn’t the only such suite, but it is the most important. You can download OpenOffice and, with some minor restrictions, you can reprogram the application and reuse it, all for free. Because you can look at and modify the underlying source code that powers the application, OpenOffice is deemed to be *open source*.

Of course OpenOffice includes a word processor, and of course that word

processor can check your spelling. It can do so in about 80 discrete languages, including six variants of English – Canadian, Australian, British, New Zealand, South African, and American. (There are a few additional dictionaries, as for Australian place names.) You can write your own spellcheck dictionary if you wish and make it available for download. Conversely, you can also download the various dictionaries and inspect them.

I did just that with the Canadian lexicon. I printed and checked its largest version. The terminology is confusing here: I used the 95th-percentile list, containing “354,984 single words and 256,772 compound words,” but it actually is only a list of the words that *differ from* the base set. I didn’t read every word, but I looked for telltale confusable words.

A few listings were outright mistakes:

- *Advertizable* always uses an *S*, assuming it is “a real word” in the first place.
- *Izing* is a suffix, not a word.
- Medical and scientific terms used Latinate *-ae-* and *-oe* rather than simpler *-e-*: *acroaesthesia*, *haemoblast*, *dioestral*. (And *dracaenaceae*. Triple word score in Scrabble!) Some *-oe-* letter sequences represent the end of one root (or morpheme) and the beginning of another, like *mythopoetized*; that’s a different category and OpenOffice spells those right. The same goes for certain plurals using *-ae*, like *tutela*, a plural form that cannot be substituted with plain *-e* (*tutele* is wrong).
- I am sure that not many Canadians would consider *Graecian* (as in “Graecian urn”) correct.

Some words akin to *coloration* mistakenly include a *U* (*ambicolourate*).

Dialysis may be dialysis everywhere, but *dialyzing* isn't *dialysing* in Canada, hence *nondialysing* and *undialysed* are errors. Same with *paralysedly* (which, again, I doubt is “a real word”).

Canadian *-re* endings (*centre*, *sombre*) can have unpleasant implications – *ochreish* is like *fiberoptic* in that it may be technically correct but rather odd to look at. (*Ochreish* means sort of ochre, or sort of dull brownish-yellow, like some old Volkswagen campers.)

Do you think *sepulchre* (a crypt or a tomb) can also be a verb? Apparently – and you can verb it and verb it again (*resepulchre*).

There's a strong tendency toward doubled consonants: *coralled*, *autodialler*.

It seems, then, that open-source software, at zero cost and with barely any money behind it, is better at Canadian spelling than Microsoft Word for Windows.

And if you're wondering about the source of the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, it's from a recent proponent of loosening up English spelling, Ken Smith, quoted in *Time* by Laura Fitzpatrick (“Making an Argument for Misspelling,” 2008.08.12). Sadly, Smith's confidence would appear to be misplaced, or at least inapplicable to Canadians.

Advice

If spellcheckers reliably steer you wrong when you're trying to spell Canadian, what are you supposed to do?

You could use a spellchecker the way I do: As a means of correcting typing errors. Don't rely on it to actually *spell* words correctly. This advice will not help you if you aren't already good at spelling. Hence the paradox of computer spellcheckers: The people who need them the most get the worst results.

Advice from the style maven

Organizing Our Marvellous Neighbours is hardly the first guidebook on Canadian spelling. It is merely the latest in a lineage dating back over 20 years. Often called *style* guides (a bit of a dismissive term, as this is not about looking good), the published advice on spelling that *doesn't* come from dictionaries has usually been conflicting or contradictory. As the saying goes, the good thing about standards is there are so many to choose from, and that is certainly true here.

Each guidebook tends to disagree with the next. What's of greatest interest is the fact that style guides have not converged as much as one would expect. There's increasing agreement on Canadian spelling, and recent style guides are willing to agree to agree – to a point. But even guidebooks from the early 2000s are hobbled by their own publishers' styles or by a simple desire to do things their own way even if nobody else really does. (In all the listings below, “this book” refers to the work under discussion, not the book you are reading now.)

As you'll see, even trained linguists and experienced editors cannot resist a dollop of prescriptivism.

Ancient history

You can go back all the way to the '70s to find reasonably well-researched discussions of Canadian spelling. *Modern Canadian English Usage: Linguistic Change and Reconstruction* by M.H. Scargill (1974)

surveyed people in all ten provinces (but neither of the territories) and asked about their preferred spellings. This isn't the best way to do it – if you make people think too much about spelling, they try to give you a smart answer instead of just naturally and automatically spelling the word.

This limitation of methodology is apparent in the results.

Canadians are almost equally divided on the use of the two variant spellings [of *colour*], with the young people

– “the young people”; isn't it great? –

tending slightly towards the *-our* spelling.

Scargill found almost equal distributions of *center/centre* and *gray/grey*, but a preference for double-*L* spellings in words like *travelled*. *Defence* as a noun was a preferred spelling, except, curiously, among “the student population” (“the young people?”).

Her Majesty's Government

The Canadian government actually published its own style guide (via Dundurn Press, 1985). *The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing* cites an order-in-council of 12 June 1890 (note the year) declaring that “in all official documents, in the Canada Gazette, and in the Dominion Statutes, the English practice of *our* endings shall be followed.”

This book recaps U.S. and U.K. spellings (via representative lists of words) and gives a concise set of rules for Canadian spelling: “[T]he following variant spellings in the above list should be used: Endings in *ize, ization, our, re*;

single *l* (as in *instil*) and *ce*; single *l* in words such as *enrolment*; *ll* in *travelled*, etc.; and *e* for digraphs (exception: *aesthetic*).”

The book also prefers shorter variants like *sizable* and *lovable* rather than *-eable* forms.

Canadian Press

English-language newspapers across the country, especially smaller ones, adhere to Canadian Press or CP style. But CP style has changed over the years.

CP Stylebook: A Guide for Writers and Editors (Peter Buckley, editor; 1993) devotes a single column of printed text to spelling. It uses the Concise Oxford Dictionary as a reference, failing to note that it’s a British dictionary, then begs to differ with the COD’s spelling. In particular, Canadian Press claims that *color*, *labor*, and *valor* are “favored” spellings. (Actually, they say the spellings were “favored by Henry Fowler in *Modern English Usage*,” but clearly they agree with Fowler.)

The style guide prefers single-consonant compounds, like *benefited* and *paralleled*.

The *Globe and Mail*

The Toronto *Globe and Mail* now calls itself Canada’s national newspaper. Some people parody that slogan and call the *Globe* “Toronto’s national newspaper.” Nonetheless, the *Globe* takes itself seriously enough to publish its own style guide.

The 1976 version (*The Globe and Mail Style Book*, E.C. Phelan, editor) says quite bluntly :“Our style is to use the *-or* ending in such words as *humor, labor, honor, valor*, etc.... The style used in Canadian Government publications and official records (always *-our*) is based on an Order-in-Council passed in 1891 [note the year – wasn’t it 1890?]and never repealed. We do not follow this style except in rare cases where a very precise text is required.”

There’s a bit of jumbled business about a few other spelling bugbears, coming down on the side of *archeology* (but *manoeuvre*) and *defence/offence/licence* as nouns. Phelan provides a four-step outline to determining single vs. double consonants in words – *flannelled, carolled, traveller*, yes, but *paralleled*, no. (That just scratches the surface; single and double consonants mingle.) And the book refuses to offer an instruction about verb endings: “There is no general rule governing choice of the verbal endings *-ise* and *-ize*.” Well, actually, there *is* a rule (use *-ize/-yze*).

By 1993, and now under the editorship of J.A. McFarlane and Warren Clements, the *Globe* had finally decided to be honest and admit that it was making things up as it went along: “The *Globe and Mail* has developed its own style to maintain consistency in its pages.” (Well, that’s the problem: Then you aren’t consistent with the rest of the country.)

McFarlane and Clements prefer *-our* endings across the board, and give a helpful list of exceptional derivatives – *discolor (discoloration)*. They’re an *-re* house, not an *-er* house (*centre, litre*). They’re not wild about doubled consonants (*focused*). But there’s no mention of verb forms using *-ize*, except the general advice to follow the Funk & Wagnalls (remember them?) Canadian College Dictionary.

Editing Canadian English

The Editors' Association of Canada's volume *Editing Canadian English* (second edition, 2000) provides a superb inventory of the spelling recommendations of several dictionaries. But it cautions against giving too much credence to dictionaries:

The problem is that dictionaries do not necessarily keep categories of spellings "pure"; their first entry for a particular word may be based on the frequency with which that spelling is encountered

– yes, that is exactly what dictionaries do –

rather than principles of consistency.... Yet internal consistency is what a particular work requires.... We recommend strongly that spellings not be mixed *within* each of the categories [listed].... If -ll- is used in *travelled*, it should also be used in *signalling*. Nevertheless, mixing categories – for example, using *labor/neighbor* and *centre/metre* – is truly Canadian.

(The *labor/neighbor* example isn't correct. Even by the year 2000, it was known that -our was the dominant, hence correct, spelling.)

This book's inventory of dictionaries shows conclusively that most dictionaries (four out of five surveyed) agree on a few Canadian spelling patterns – *centre, behaviour, paralleled* – but disagree on some others. Rather incredibly, two out of three dictionaries authorize spellings like *authorise*.

Guide to Canadian English Usage

Two editions of this reference work, edited by Margery Fee and Janice McAlpine of the Strathy Language Unit at Queen's University, are available (1997 and 2007). They plunk down with some heft on one's desk, and purport to provide definitive answers. But they're hobbled by the ideology of their own publisher, Oxford.

As a usage manual and not a dictionary, *Guide to Canadian English Usage* provides lengthy explanations of specific words and situations. The issue of doubling a final consonant (*focused* or *focussed*? *benefiting* or *benefitting*?) gets almost a full page, and admits that not everyone agrees on every case.

On the basic issue of "spelling, Canadian," the book states the truth and states that Canadians "tend to be consistent within some major categories. For example, most Canadians choose the *-ize/-yze* endings (also favoured by Americans) over the *-ise/-yse* endings more common in Britain." We also tend to use double consonants (except when we don't, according to the other section that handles that topic).

The book gives a handy list of British-derived spellings we prefer (*axe*, *catalogue*, *centre*, *cheque*, *fulfil* [double-consonant alert], *grey*, *manoeuvre*) and the doppelgänger list of American spellings we prefer (*analyze*, *carburetor*, *criticize*, *encyclopedia*, *judgment*, *medieval*, *movable*, *peddler*, *plow*, *program*, *raccoon* [as opposed to racoon], *woollen*). However, the editors go right off the rails in claiming that "Canadians are divided over whether to use *-our* or *-or* endings." In truth, this is one place Canadians enjoy national unity – we use *-our*.

A skeptical view

Should Canadian English exist?

Is that a stupid question? It would be hard to change the speech of 18 million people.

But people write fewer words than they speak. Maybe that would be easier to change. So: Should Canadian *spelling* exist?

It's unnecessarily complicated. It's also unnecessarily different from two other systems, British and American. This, at least, is the argument that could be made, and it too is a popularity contest of a sort: There are more people who write British or American and our spelling is almost the same as theirs, so shouldn't we "harmonize" with one of those?

In this thought experiment, first let's dispense with the fiction that British and American are equal candidates. Barely anybody in the country would unreservedly advocate adopting American spellings. If there's one thing Canadians aren't, it's American. (Americans deny this: "You *are* Americans – *North* Americans." They never quite apply this reasoning to Mexicans.) Perhaps, if stereotypes hold true, Conservative Party members or Albertans would be OK with going American.

But in reality, a proposal to adopt somebody else's spelling is a restatement of the denial of Canadian spelling. "There really isn't any agreement on what 'Canadian spelling' is," this denial begins. "We have to standardize on somebody's spelling," it continues. "And it can't very well be the Americans',"

it concludes, at least if the speaker is being honest.

Canada is founded on the myth of two original peoples, the English and the French. (It's a myth not because it is an oft-told tale but because it is false: The land we now know as Canada was already home to many peoples by the time the English and French showed up.) We learn this founding myth in school, but then we separate along linguistic lines: English-speakers more or less pretend the French founders did not exist, and French-speakers do the converse.

As a result, English-speakers hold a vague image in the back of their minds of a direct lineage from the United Kingdom to Canada. Even if you aren't ethnically British or Irish, you still had this connection drummed into you in school. If you're a third-generation Polish-Canadian or a descendant of one of the black families that have been in Canada since the 1600s, somewhere deep down you think there's a thin but resilient historical thread that joins Canada to England.

You probably can't imagine a similar historical thread linking Canada to the United States. In fact, you might decry the undue influence the U.S. has on Canadian culture, entertainment, and politics.

Hence, in the thought experiment of adopting some other nation's spelling, I wager you will unconsciously gravitate toward choosing England's spelling. Canada is essentially British, you feel. That's true, or it was true once – but Canadian English is not essentially British. It's essentially American. You were never taught that in school. At best, the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists around 1783 was half-explained, with no mention of the chief legacy of their exodus to Canada – our speech.

If we had to standardize on another dialect of English, the dialect you'd recommend – British – is the one that sounds less like spoken Canadian English

and has fewer common terms. And to be consistent, you'd have to adopt the dominant British house style for quotation marks ('use "single quotes" first').

A month after this changeover took place, you'd think you were in another country, as every professionally-produced document you read would appear to have derived from the British Isles. By replacing Canadian spelling with British, we'd prove Canadian spelling really existed all along.

In the opposite case, there would be fewer overtly noticeable differences. Our new all-American Canadian spelling would continue to end verbs in *-ize*, but would drop a few *Us* and regularize a couple of common words, like *center*. At that point, it would be perplexing to take a vacation that included a visit to the National Arts Centre or the Confederation Centre. It would be like visiting a relic of a former time.

Nonetheless, the adoption of American spelling could possibly work. It appeals to a deep-seated fear that "integration" with the United States is inevitable. (Writers like Diane Francis openly advocate consideration of a common currency, either the existing U.S. dollar or a new *amero*.) If Canadian publications began to use U.S. spelling across the board, you might think to yourself, "Well... it had to happen someday."

But the elimination of Canadian spelling is a non-starter for one obvious reason: Canadian spelling really does exist. We really do spell words differently from the Americans and the British. Without fail, those who claim there is no consensus about Canadian spelling simply haven't done their homework. It is a way of saying "Spelling confuses me and I'm not totally sure how to do it right."

That's fine. But it's dishonest to make the leap to denying that Canadian spelling exists. It is an effacement of the existence of Canada, of its importance. We are a "mere" 32 million people – small in comparison to the 60 million in the

U.K. and tiny in comparison to the 301 million in the United States. We've been told for decades that Canada is "a small market." But languages aren't markets, and all it takes to make a dialect are *two people who agree*. We've got 18 million Canadian English speakers who broadly agree.

Just as Canada is unique in combining U.S. and U.K. forms, we are unique in using a "minority" English whose existence some deny in the first place. (Recall the scenario of the writer who thinks nobody is really sure what "Canadian spelling" is.) You'd never hear the same argument from speakers of English in countries with even smaller populations, like Australia and New Zealand. Barely as many people speak New Zealand English as speak English in the Golden Horseshoe. But even that dialect is distinct from Australian, which in turn is distinct from Canadian, British, and American. Those three dialects together outnumber the total of Australian and New Zealand English-speakers.

But – again – the Australians and the New Zealanders do not deny they speak their own dialects, nor do they (even idly) propose standardizing on somebody else's language. Even more importantly, *Canadians* do not deny that *Australians and New Zealanders* speak a dialect different from Canadians' own, even if Canadians cannot distinguish Australian from New Zealander.

Educated people can differentiate British, Scottish, and Irish accents. Some educated people can spot a Canadian accent in a sequence of seemingly identical American voices in an instant.

Canadians, then, are more than willing to accept that some speech will sound different from Canadian speech, and, some of the time, we are willing to accept that Canadian speech sounds slightly different from American. But there seems to be a residual core of doubters who believe the way we write isn't different from the way the Americans, British, Irish, Scottish, New Zealanders or Australians write. But it is – demonstrably.

That residual core of doubt continues to haunt the Canadian psyche. It's another variation of the fear that, while we may speak English, we don't speak it right, well, or properly. Only the British do, of course. How embarrassing and tawdry that we'd end up sounding like Americans. But we don't sound *exactly* like Americans, we don't sound at all like the British, and we don't spell *exactly* like either of them.

Spelling reforms, even in autocratic countries, are always contentious. Whether the spelling change is as profound as the use of a different writing system (Serbo-Croat, Tajik) or a reduction in the complexity of non-alphabetic characters (Chinese), or as modest as dropping a few accent characters (Greek) or simply changing the order of words in the dictionary (Spanish), there are always people who doubt the need for the reform and others who simply never play along. Old spellings continue to be used even if someone insists that new ones be used. A reform of Canadian spelling would be deceptively complex and would work out as well as other English spelling reforms have tended to do – not very.

Were this kind of reform ever seriously proposed, it would immediately lead to name-calling in blog comment fields and, presumably, on mainstream talk shows. Proponents of British spelling would be called snobs; proponents of American spelling would be called sellouts. Curiously, I doubt there would be a split along classic liberal/conservative lines; I think people would be surprised at who ends up in which camp.

But the mere act of proposing a Canadian spelling reform would be like proposing the secession of Quebec. The question would be vague. The benefits would be unclear or modest. Otherwise-calm people would turn on their friends and relatives. Minorities within minorities (like Americans and British living in Canada) would demand the same treatment. And the whole thing would die on a tie vote.

Canadian English spelling is like Canadian English speech: It exists because it has centuries of precedent and because it has been proven, not least by this book, that people use it. People are not about to stop using Canadian English because of nebulous claims that another nation's dialect is "better" or "simpler."

Canadian spelling cheatsheet

Easy rules

-re not -er

centre, kilometre, lustre and lacklustre, calibre, sabre, ochre, microfibre

Same goes for verbs, adjectives, and adverbs: *centring, sombrely, mitred*

-our not -or

colour, labour, favour, honour and honourable, glamour

But many adjectives drop the *U*: *colorful, laborious, favorable, honorable, glamorous*

-ize not -ise (but be careful)

Many words use *-ize*: *realize, optimize, authorize, reprioritize, paralyze*

But many other words always use *-ise* everywhere that English is written, including Canada: *exercise, advertise, excise, devise, chastise, improvise, rise*

-ould not -old

mould, moulting, smouldering

Drop an E, add an E

No *E*: *achievable, livable, lovable, licensable, movable*

Added *E*: *axe, analogue, catalogue*

Tricky rules

Some nouns don't match their verbs

Offence is a noun. So are *defence* and *licence*. But *license* is a verb (hence *licensing*). *Practice* is a noun (also *malpractice*) and *practise* is a verb (*practising*)

Oddball words

We write some words the way Americans do: *program, curb, draft,*

aluminum, cozy, oriented, cognizant, tire (on a vehicle)

We write a few words the way the British do: *cheque* (banking; also *chequing account, chequebook*), *sulphur, storey* (*three-storey building*).

Doubled consonants -ll-, -ss-, -tt

There isn't agreement here. Use a single or double consonant, but be consistent and use one set of spellings all the time.

- *model* → *modelling*
- *budget* → *budgetted*
- *focus* → *focussed*

The same goes for words like *skillful, willful*, and *fulfillment*. Choose one *L* or two, but be consistent.

Sources

Canadian Oxford Dictionary (Second Edition, 2004) and original research. ¶
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I put valiant effort into verifying the ostensibly Canadian spellings included in computer spellcheckers. But other people did some of that work, too.

First, thanks to Laurie McArthur of the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre, University of Toronto, who arranged for me to set foot on an alien landscape and use Word 2007 under Windows Vista – without question the most confusing software in my 30 years of personal-computer usage. I ran my own tests of the Mac OS X built-in spellchecker (twice) and Word 2002 for Windows.

Simon Daniels of Microsoft Typography, at my request, ran his own test of Word 2007. Mili Carr and James Hatley tested InDesign CS3. Sanford Miller spellchecked under WordPerfect.

I've had some supporters along the way in this endeavour, but not many. I do, however, wish to thank everyone who bought Version 1.0 of this book.

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11. From a Cadet to a Soldier
12. Glenda Watson Hyatt
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6. Mighton, John, *Half-Life*
7. Murphy, Colleen, *The December Man*
8. Nikiforuk, Andrew, *Saboteurs: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil*
9. Panych, Morris, *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl*
10. Roy, Gabrielle, *Enchantment and Sorrow: The Autobiography of Gabrielle Roy*
11. Thiessen, Vern, *Einstein's Gift*
12. Vaillant, John, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth,*

Madness and Greed

Toronto Literary Awards winners

1. Backhouse, Constance, and Nancy L. Backhouse, *The Heiress vs. the Establishment: Mrs. Campbell's Campaign for Legal Justice*
2. Bazzana, Kevin, *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*
3. Bell, Douglas, *Run Over: A Boy, His Mother and an Accident*
4. Bishop-Stall, Shaughnessy, *Down to This*
5. Carlson, Keith Thor, *A Stó:ilō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*
6. Hayes, Derek, *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley*
7. Herzog, Fred, *Vancouver Photographs*
8. James, Geoffrey, *Toronto*
9. Smith, Ed, *From the Ashes of My Dreams*

Other literary awards

Books that won or were shortlisted for the stated awards.

1. Akler, Howard, *The City Man* (Toronto Book Awards 2006)
2. Clark, Joan, *An Audience of Chairs* (2006 Bennington Gate Fiction)

Award)

3. Dalton, Mary, *Merrybegot* (Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards)
4. Duncan, Dorothy, *Canadians at Table: Food, Fellowship, and Folklore: A Culinary History of Canada* (Canadian Culinary Book Awards 2007)
5. Kavanagh, Ed, *The Confessions of Nipper Mooney* (Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards)
6. Lucas, Fiona, *Hearth and Home: Women and the Art of Open-Hearth Cooking* (Canadian Culinary Book Awards 2007)
7. Merrill, Judith, and Poll-Weary, Emily, *Better to Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merrill* (Toronto Book Awards 2003)
8. Redhill, Michael, *Consolation* (Toronto Book Awards 2007)
9. Rendell, Susan, *In the Chambers of the Sea* (Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards)
10. Scott, Chic, *Powder Pioneers: Ski Stories from the Canadian Rockies and Columbia Mountains* (Banff Mountain Book Festival 2006)
11. Steffler, John, *Helix* (Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards)
12. Vij, Vikram, *Vij's: Elegant and Inspired Indian Cuisine* (Canadian Culinary Book Awards 2007)

NSCAD Press books

Books from the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design Press.

1. Gale, Peggy, *Artists Talk: 1969–1977*
2. Soucy, Donald, and Pearse, Harold, *The First Hundred Years: A History of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*

Coach House Press books

1. Kiyōoka, Roy, *Pear Tree Pomes*
2. Laferrière, Dany, *How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*
3. Thesen, Sharon, *The Beginning of the Long Dash*

Porcupine's Quill books

1. Page, P.K., *Up on the Roof*
2. Urquhart, Jane, *Storm Glass*

University of Toronto Press books

1. Bakvis, Herman, *Federalism and the role of the state*
2. Beare, Margaret E., and Tonita Murray, *Police and Government Relations: Who's Calling the Shots?*
3. Bureau of Architecture and Urbanism, *Toronto Modern:*

Architecture: 1945–1965

4. Campbell, H.C., *One Hundred Books Since 1471: An Exhibition of Fine Printing from the Collections of the Toronto Public Library*
5. Drummond, Ian M., *Progress Without Planning: The Economic History of Ontario from Confederation to the Second World War*
6. Muirhead, Bruce, *Dancing Around the Elephant: Creating a Prosperous Canada in an Era of American Dominance, 1957–1973*
7. Titchkosky, Tanya, *Reading and Writing Disability Differently: The Textured Life of Embodiment*

Books by specific authors

By Douglas Coupland

1. *All Families Are Psychotic*
2. *City of Glass*
3. *Eleanor Rigby*
4. *Girlfriend in a Coma*
5. *The Gum Thief*
6. *Hey[,] Nostradamus!*
7. *JPod* (sic; unlike the title of the ensuing CBC Television series, it isn't

jPod)

8. *Life After God* (also the theatrical adaptation by Michael Lewis MacLennan)
9. *Miss Wyoming*
10. *Polaroids from the Dead*
11. *Shampoo Planet*
12. *Terry*

By William Gibson

1. *All Tomorrow's Parties*
2. *Burning Chrome*
3. *Count Zero*
4. *Idoru*
5. *Mona Lisa Overdrive*
6. *Neuromancer*
7. *Pattern Recognition*
8. *Spook Country*
9. *Virtual Light*

By Russell Smith

1. *How Insensitive*

2. *Muriella Pent*
3. *Noise*
4. *The Princess and the Whisk Heads*
5. *Young Men*

By former prime ministers

1. Campbell, Kim, *Making Government Work for Canada; The Sayings of Chairman Kim*
2. Chrétien, Jean, *Straight from the Heart*
3. Mulroney, Brian, *Where I Stand*
4. Trudeau, Pierre, *"A Mess That Deserves a Big No"*

By ultra-nationalist Canadian writers

1. Barlow, Maude, *Blue Covenant*; Barlow and Selin Shannon, *Women and Arms Control in Canada*
2. Cameron, Stevie, *Blue Trust; Ottawa Inside Out; The Picton File*
3. McQuaig, Linda, *All You Can Eat; Behind Closed Doors; Holding the Bully's Coat; It's the Crude, Dude*

Dictionaries

1. Corbeil, Jean-Claude, *French/English Visual Dictionary*
2. Falk, L., *The English Language in Nova Scotia*
3. Isajlovic, Renata, *Québécois–English English–Québécois Dictionary & Phrasebook*
4. Pratt, T.K., *PEI Sayings*
5. Scargill, M.H., *Modern Canadian English Usage*
6. Summers, Elspeth, and Holmes, Andrew, *Collins Canadian English Dictionary & Thesaurus*
7. Waugh, Earle H., *Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary*
8. Wolvengrey, Arok, *Cree Words*

Style guides

1. Buckley, P., *Globe and Mail Style Book*
2. *Canadian Press Stylebook*
3. McFarlane, J.A., *Globe and Mail Style Book*
4. Ministry of Supply and Services, *The Canadian Style*

Other sources

1. Orkin, Mary, *Canajan, Eh?*
2. Slaght, Margaret, *Talking Canadian* (CBC Newsworld, 2004)

Incidental references

- The sentence “Hence the paradox of computer spellcheckers: The people who need them the most get the worst results” (from “The Coquitlam effect”) owes a debt to *Unicode Explained* (O’Reilly, 2006), in which author Jukka K. Korpela wrote “The paradox of language markup: It’s easy when it’s not needed.”
- Diane Francis essentially cast her vote in favour of economic integration with the U.S. (going so far as to use the word *amero*) in *Who Owns Canada Now: Old Money, New Money and the Future of Canadian Business* (HarperCollins, 2008).
- Katherine Barber and Oxford University Press’s wide-ranging reading habits were documented by her own company and by other writers. Ian Brown mentioned her reading the Canadian Tire catalogue in “Vocabulary: Are we losing our lexicon?,” *Globe and Mail*, 2007.06.16. (Oxford University Press Canada reiterated that claim on its [Web site](#).) OUP’s reading of “logging magazines” et al. comes from Francine Kopun’s “Oxford dictionary recognizes Austin Powers,” *Toronto Star*, 2007.12.14.
- The New Oxford American Dictionary named *podcast* word of the year in a press release entitled, perhaps reasonably, “[‘Podcast’ Is the Word of the Year](#)” (approximately 2005.12.13; it didn’t include a date).

- The quotation from the CBC (using a mixture of British and American spellings) comes from a PDF entitled “Call for Comments on the Scope of a Future Proceeding on Canadian Broadcasting in New Media: Broadcasting Notice of Public Hearing CRTC 2008-44: Comments of CBC/Radio-Canada,” 2008.07.11.

Population counts

Canadian population data derive from Statistics Canada. The number of speakers of English in Canada is given in “Population by mother tongue and age groups, 2006 counts, for Canada, provinces and territories – 20% sample data” (2007.12.03) as follows:

- English: 17,882,775
- English and French: 98,625
- English and a third language: 240,005
- English, French, and a third language: 10,790

Those numbers total 18,232,195.

The Office for National Statistics in the U.K. estimated “the resident population of the UK was 60,975,000.” The U.S. Census Bureau stated “the 2007 population estimate for the United States is 301,621,157.”

Colophon

HTML version

Organizing Our Marvellous Neighbours: How to Feel Good About Canadian English was written in BBEdit, the Macintosh text editor, in HTML 4.01 Strict. The HTML files were opened in Microsoft Word for Macintosh, and then placed and laid out in InDesign CS2 for graphic design. Tagged PDFs were produced in InDesign, then edited and improved in Acrobat 8.1 Professional.

PDF version

The typeface used in the PDF version is Freight Micro by Joshua Darden, designed for low-resolution printing and other applications that require, as Darden puts it, “heavy lifting.” The typeface was a gift of the designer.

ePub version

The ePub version reused the original HTML 4.01 files, easily converted to the required XHTML 1.1. I laboriously assembled these files into the required containers. Just accomplishing this task required perusal, and effective learning,

of four different technical specifications. Files were validated via Threepress's [ePub Validator](#). Betas were perused on various platforms and readers, including Firefox and Stanza.

Why'd it take so long?

This book took over two years to write, if we include time spent procrastinating and gestating the idea. *It took that long to write a book this short.*

Raw data

I published all the electronically-available raw data I used to complete this book. You may download my research and verify my work, do your own work, or do something else with it, within reason. Data are online at en-CA.org/data.

Contact

If you have any comments about *Organizing Our Marvellous Neighbours*, send them along to joeclark@joeclark.org.

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Have you spotted a mistake?

In Version 1.0 of this book (2008), I offered a bounty for anyone who spotted an error. All known errors have been corrected in this version. This book may still include errors, but that bounty is now cancelled. Errata are [published online](#).